

A Better Deal for Queens and the Bronx

Proposals from Congressman Joe Crowley
for New York's 14th Congressional District



Friends,

It's always been my belief that Americans do best when their communities are secure, strong, and filled with opportunity. When families feel as if they have the chance to get ahead through hard work and a level playing field. And when the American Dream is available to all Americans regardless of their background or heritage. But for far too many families, that isn't the case in America today. They feel left behind by the Republicans in government who seem to have abandoned middle-class Americans and working families in favor of corporations and special interests.



There is a better way – a better deal we can offer Americans. Democrats are fighting for true progress for the men and women who built this country and contribute most to our economy and communities: the shift worker, the firefighter, the nurse, the teacher, the entrepreneur, the small business owner, the student, the DREAMer, and all our neighbors.

That is why I'm so proud to share with you my Better Deal for Queens and the Bronx. This is a collection of concrete promises to you. I know there are real and tangible improvements that can be made in our communities to make life better for New Yorkers. My plan will make it easier for students to learn in modern classrooms and for parents to make the best choices for their families about child care and careers. It will help commuters get to work on time and grow in their jobs. My Better Deal for Queens and the Bronx is a promise that I'll fight for higher wages and a more just criminal justice system. Promises that will make our communities and families stronger and more financially secure.

My grandparents and mother immigrated to the United States in search of a better life. They sought out the promise of a land that offered hope and the guarantee that if you put in a hard day's work and gave back to your neighborhoods, your family would do well. It's a dream I know all families in Queens and the Bronx share.

But when workers can't get ahead because CEOs earn nearly 350 times more than them, that dream becomes too hard to obtain for too many. The American economy is no longer working for everyday Americans. Democrats are fighting for that to change, and I want to make sure that the national priorities I'm pushing in Congress will first and foremost help my neighbors in Queens and the Bronx.

Thank you for the opportunity to represent you in Congress. It is the honor of a lifetime. I know that if we work together and fight for Americans and their families, we can return balance and fairness to our communities and move forward together.

All my best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Joseph R. S.". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Better Jobs with Better Wages

It is critical that we connect people in Queens and the Bronx with meaningful jobs that provide them with a living wage and the ability to support their families. We can start making a difference right away by raising the minimum wage and helping hard-working parents with the insurmountable costs of child care. To prepare people for better jobs, we must also close the skills gap by making it easier for new hires to get the training they need and encouraging young people to seek careers in the growing STEM fields.

On-the-Job Training Act

Training someone on the job has shown to be the most effective way to improve practical career skills. According to the Department of Labor, more than 80 percent of workers who participated in on-the-job training programs still had their jobs after nine months. That's why we need federal employment and training programs to focus on this model. Congressman Crowley will push for his legislation to broadly expand on-the-job training by establishing dedicated grants that give incentives to workforce agencies, colleges, and industry associations that work with local businesses in setting up on-the-job training programs.

STEM Career Fairs

Congressman Crowley is working on the ground in Queens and the Bronx to bridge the skills gap through annual STEM Career Fairs with career organizations and middle- and high-school students. The next career fair will be in the Bronx this spring, giving students a valuable opportunity to learn about the skills that will serve them well for the future.

Raising the Minimum Wage to \$15 Per Hour

As a member of the House Democratic Leadership, Congressman Crowley will continue to push for passage of national legislation to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. He will also ensure the minimum wage does not lose its value over time by connecting it to the median wage nationwide.

Help Working Families Afford Quality Child Care

In 28 states and the District of Columbia, the average annual cost for child care for an infant was higher than a year's tuition and fees at a four-year public college. Congressman Crowley will build support for his Children First Act to expand funding for child care assistance by more than \$86 billion over ten years for working families with children under four years old. The bill also improves health and safety standards for child care, so that all children can receive quality care.

Better Education for All

The best way to secure our future is by giving our children access to high-quality education. That begins with safe, healthy learning environments equipped with the modern tools that help students learn. Furthermore, with skyrocketing tuition putting college and vocational training out of reach for far too many students, we have a responsibility to make higher education more affordable and accessible to all those in Queens and the Bronx.

Increase Federal School Construction Funds and Target to Highly Overcrowded Areas

More than half of New York City schools are overcrowded, and some of the most-impacted districts affect students and families in Queens and the Bronx. Community School District 24, which includes Corona, Elmhurst, and Lefrak City, is the most overcrowded in New York City, with a need for more than 5,000 additional seats. Congressman Crowley has long supported efforts to spur school construction. Now, he will introduce legislation to increase federal school construction and expansion funds for school districts with the highest rates of overcrowding. This national proposal will help to alleviate overcrowding across the country.

Peaceful Learning Act

A number of schools in our district and throughout New York City are located next to or close to public transit, creating repeated disruption for students as they try to learn. Studies have shown that excessive noise exposure makes it harder for children to do well. To help our students focus on their education, Congressman Crowley will introduce legislation to study the impacts of noise on learning and create a grant program to help soundproof schools near elevated subway lines.

Increased Funding for Student Aid

To help all Americans afford college if they choose to attend, Congressman Crowley will lead a bipartisan effort to increase funding for Campus-Based Aid programs, which provide low-income students a manageable balance of grants, loans, and work study options. Nearly 500 students from NY-14 received a total of \$659,071 in the 2016-17 academic year under these programs, which could be broadly expanded if Congress increased funding.



Better and More Affordable Housing

We must make housing more affordable, particularly for the large number of New Yorkers who rent. More than 100 million Americans rent their homes, and more than half of renters in New York are considered “rent-burdened,” as they pay more than 30 percent of their income toward rent. More than half of homes in Queens are rented, while in the Bronx it’s more than 80 percent. For decades, Congress has focused on policies that help people afford to buy a home. It’s long past time we expand our focus to help those who rent.

Rent Relief Act

Congressman Crowley has championed efforts to create a new tax credit for renters to help them afford increasingly expensive housing. Renters in Queens and the Bronx could see an additional tax relief annually if the Rent Relief Act is signed into law.

Encouraging Affordable Housing Development

Congressman Crowley strongly supports aggressive improvements to the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit to help finance more affordable development in Queens, the Bronx, and nationwide.



A Better Way to Fight Homelessness

Over the past few years, our city has witnessed a heartbreaking growth in its homeless population, particularly among children and families. Today, there are nearly 3,900 unsheltered homeless people living in New York City. Everyone deserves to have a roof over his or her head, and we must do everything we can to help our fellow New Yorkers stay in their homes or find a way to get back on their feet. It is one of the most important issues facing our city. However, this needs to be a community discussion, as the most effective solutions will have the buy-in of all New Yorkers.

Preventing Predatory Evictions and Protecting Tenants' Rights

Congressman Crowley is drawing attention to the abuse of our judicial system to intimidate and pressure hard-working renters out of their money, or even their homes. To help protect tenants, he will introduce legislation encouraging cities to adopt a model enacted in New York City last summer that guarantees legal representation for low-income tenants in housing court.

A Thoughtful Approach to Helping the Homeless

Congressman Crowley believes New York City must provide better leadership when it comes to helping homeless New Yorkers. He will work to ensure that there is a good-faith partnership with our communities that fosters open dialogue on how best to deal with the city's homelessness crisis.



A Better America

As the son and grandson of immigrants, Congressman Crowley knows America's proud tradition of welcoming those who seek a better life makes our country great. Immigration reform is one of the most important moral issues facing our country, and it demands an urgent response.

Protect DREAMers and Enact Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Immigrants make our nation and our city better. The thousands of undocumented immigrants in Queens and the Bronx deserve to be able to continue contributing to their communities. Through his position in the House Democratic Leadership, Congressman Crowley will continue to press for solutions for DREAMers and call for comprehensive immigration reform.

Make it Easier for “New” Americans to Register to Vote

Congressman Crowley will continue to spearhead legislation to require immigrants to be given voter registration forms and voter information at citizenship ceremonies.

Stand Up for Immigrant Communities

Unfortunately, immigrants in our communities have come under attack from damaging policies, hateful rhetoric, and outright physical attacks. New York City has been a beacon of hope and welcome to our immigrants, and Congressman Crowley will stand up strong in support of continuing these standards.



A Better Justice System

Our justice system is based on the notion that everyone is treated equally before the law. But far too many men and women have lost trust in that system. We can regain that trust by ensuring our prison system is safe, secure, and focused on rehabilitation. Furthermore, we must ensure our justice system does not unfairly disadvantage low-income individuals. New York has announced plans to make our system more equitable by eliminating requirements to post bail in cash, and we must make similar reforms at the federal level to make our justice system fairer.

End Federal Funding for Private Prisons

Congressman Crowley believes private prisons have no place in our judicial system. The focus of our prison system must be on rehabilitation, and that mission is distorted when prisons are used to earn a profit. For this reason, Congressman Crowley spearheaded efforts to ensure no federal dollars go to private prisons. He will also advocate for passage of the Justice Is Not for Sale Act, which would end federal use of private prisons and detention facilities.

Close the Rikers Island Correctional Facility

Congressman Crowley has long believed that the situation at Rikers Island is untenable for inmates and correction officers alike. He supports efforts to close the facility and believes we must come up with progressive ways to swiftly reduce the population at the jail in order to allow for a faster closure.

Reform Our Bail System

Congressman Crowley believes the Justice Department must stop undoing progress made during the Obama administration to make our justice system more equitable. That includes exploring alternatives to cash bail, particularly for first-time and non-violent offenders who are not a flight risk.

Improve Re-Entry Mental Health Services for Individuals Upon Release

Once individuals have served their time or have been released after being exonerated, we have to make sure they have a viable path to becoming successful, productive members of society. That's why Congressman Crowley introduced the Kalief Browder Re-Entry Success Act, which seeks to improve mental health services for those re-entering society after time in jail or prison.

A Better Life for Seniors

Our seniors deserve a dignified and peaceful retirement that allows them to enjoy the lives they've worked so hard to build. That starts with affordable housing and supportive services that don't require them to leave home or live far from their communities. This also means ensuring that basic financial support and health care programs for seniors remain strong.

Expand Supportive Housing for Seniors

Congressman Crowley will urge the Trump administration to expand and further invest in supportive housing development for seniors. Under the federal "Section 202" program, the Department of Housing and Urban Development helps to finance projects to create supportive housing for low-income elderly persons. It also helps seniors who live in these developments pay their rent. Unfortunately, Republicans in Congress have not provided funding for new units since 2011, and new resources are desperately needed in Queens and the Bronx.

Enhance and Defend Social Security

Congressman Crowley supports expanding Social Security and opposes cynical Republican attempts to undermine or cut the program. He will also lead an effort to stop Republicans and the Trump administration from undermining the administrative budget of the agency, which pays for staff to process claims and consult with beneficiaries. This back-door effort to weaken Social Security has led to skyrocketing wait times for New Yorkers seeking to access the benefits they have earned.

Protect Medicare and Medicaid

While Republicans line up programs like Medicare and Medicaid in their sights for drastic cuts or benefit changes, Congressman Crowley supports strengthening and defending these programs. He will lead efforts to fight against cuts that hurt seniors and their health care providers in Queens and the Bronx. Medicare and Medicaid are vital lifelines to seniors in Queens and the Bronx, ensuring that critical health care needs don't bankrupt seniors and their families.



A Better Deal for Veterans

NY-14 is home to a significant concentration of veterans. Nearly 30,000 veterans live in the Bronx and more than 58,800 veterans reside in Queens. In fact, 28% of New York City's veterans live in Queens – more than any other borough. Yet, too many of these brave Americans can't find affordable housing and other needed resources. We must make sure New York's veterans can afford to live and work here once they return home.

Ensuring All Veterans Can Live Where They Go to School

In New York City, it is illegal for landlords and private management companies to put up barriers that discriminate against student veterans, whose GI Bill educational benefits are not counted as income. However, landlords are frequently unaware of this law. Congressman Crowley will work with the New York City Department of Veterans Services to educate landlords in the district and prevent illegal discrimination. He will also ensure this becomes federal policy by introducing legislation to protect student veterans who submit rental applications from discrimination.

Reducing Veteran Homelessness through Rent Relief

The more we help veterans afford their housing, the better we can address our city's homelessness crisis. Congressman Crowley will lead a push to ensure that city-wide efforts to reduce veteran homelessness are felt in Queens and the Bronx. To achieve a zero percent rate of veteran homelessness, Congressman Crowley will introduce new legislation that builds upon his Rent Relief Act. This legislation will explicitly define income for veterans to clarify that low- and middle-income veterans have access to tax credits and affordable housing.



Better Infrastructure for our Communities

New York City once led the country and the world when it came to modern infrastructure. It is time for us to reinvest in these assets to make our communities more livable, more modern, and more efficient. Improving our infrastructure won't just create jobs, it will also reduce the time residents of the Bronx and Queens spend commuting to and from work.

Bringing Metro-North Service to the Bronx

For more than a decade, Congressman Crowley has led the call for an expansion of Metro-North to the eastern portion of the Bronx. This will expand public transit options and allow commuters to avoid having to go into Manhattan to travel north and east. Following Congressman Crowley's calls, Gov. Cuomo included this proposal in his 2014 State of the State Address, and the MTA has said it is a feasible plan, but has not made progress on the effort. To push this project forward, Congressman Crowley will ask MTA to establish an explicit timeline for Metro-North expansion.

Lead Paint Abatement and Re-Painting of the Elevated 7-Line

For more than a year, communities in Jackson Heights and Corona have voiced concerns about lead paint peeling from the elevated 7-line tracks. Allowing our communities to continue suffering such a hazard is unacceptable, and we must immediately dedicate resources to remediating it. Congressman Crowley will press MTA President Joe Lhota to ensure the MTA fixes the peeling lead paint and safely repaints the elevated tracks.

Shoring up Coastal Protections in the Bronx

Throggs Neck, Edgewater Park, and City Island were seriously impacted by Superstorm Sandy. Congressman Crowley will urge the New York City Department of Transportation to expedite a long-stalled project to repair and rebuild the seawall in Throggs Neck. He will also spearhead an effort to have the Army Corps of Engineers focus resources on ways to make these communities more resilient so we reduce the impact of a future storm.

Making Bronx Development Sustainable

Growth in our communities is a sign of success, but we must make sure our infrastructure can sustain it. As the Throggs Neck community continues to add residents and businesses, our roads must be able to support increased traffic and parking needs. That is why Congressman Crowley supports a project to "deck over" and cover part of the Bruckner Expressway. This project will allow the community to gain much needed parking and provide alternatives for traffic patterns that will reduce delays for residents and emergency vehicles.

Better Transportation Options

New Yorkers agree – getting around New York City shouldn't be so difficult. Yet, communities, particularly in the Bronx and Queens, have long borne the brunt of limited transit options – many of which fail to meet basic accessibility standards. Improving access within our public transit system, as well as investing in transit alternatives, will help New Yorkers in these underserved communities better navigate our city.

Accessibility of our Transit System

Congressman Crowley believes the MTA should develop a public timeline for installing elevators at every subway station so our system is completely accessible, and should integrate these into existing renovation plans in order to accomplish this goal efficiently.

Helping Hard-Working New Yorkers Afford Transit

Congressman Crowley believes the MTA should review proposals to help low-income individuals pay for access to our transit system through subsidized MetroCards. We must make sure New Yorkers can afford to get around our city, especially as they commute to work.

Bikeshare in Every Neighborhood

Bikeshare has become a crucial component of our transportation system and has attracted millions of users, but it has yet to reach those areas least served by our public transit system. Congressman Crowley has put forward legislation to make bikeshare membership eligible for existing commuter benefits, which employers provide as an employee benefit, such as parking or reimbursement for the subway. This proposal won't just make bikeshare more affordable for those who use it to get to work – it will attract new users and provide an incentive for CitiBike to install bikeshare stations in every neighborhood in NY-14, especially those with fewer transportation options.

